

Climatic stalemate in Bangkok

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Comment

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AS the United Nations negotiations on climate change drew to a close on Friday in Bangkok, the atmosphere of pessimism was already being widely reported by many of those involved, especially from developing countries.

The prospect of an abandoned Kyoto Protocol was said to be in the air, thanks to the developed economies, as they seemed to be more eager to do away with it when it expires in a couple of years time.

Firm-sounding pledges made during the UN Climate Summit in New York of late to fight the climate change have not been followed through in earnest, resulting in the Chair of the Kyoto Protocol to comment: "We will be a laughing stock come December 18," in reference to the Copenhagen Climate Conference to be held from Dec 7 to 18.

As though to drive home a point, Mother Nature was not in a compromising mood. Three major disasters were unleashed in the Asia-Pacific region alone: a major earthquake in neighbouring Sumatra, a protracted downpour-cum-flood in Manila, and a massive tsunami in Samoa.

Some parts of India, too, experienced a heavy flood with loss of lives, and thousands more being injured and traumatised.

The repeat of similar disasters should compel us to reflect hard as to what has gone wrong. Their rather frequent occurrences must point to some causal factor.

And for most, it has something to do with the unconventional changes in the climate, and the ensuing global warming.

We need no reminder that Mother Nature has a way of striking back, as it were, if we continue to ignore her solemn warning.

And going by what the Bangkok meeting has to offer, Mother Nature will be further unheeded, as the most "guilty" among us, the developed world, refuse to change our ways.

After all, is it not the developed countries that are, collectively, most responsible for the high carbon emission into the atmosphere? Are not their so-called multinational companies creating ecological havoc in many parts of the world? This is not all. At the World Bank's 2010 new development report entitled Development and Climate Change, in Istanbul last week, its chief economist emphasised that developing countries will suffer the most from climate change.

As much as 80 per cent of the damage from climate change will impact the developing world despite being accountable to no more than a third of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere.

According to the chief economist for sustainable development of the bank, the cost of mitigating and adapting to climate change would cost about US\$300 billion (RM1 trillion) a year in 20 years time, in 2030.

To quote a policy adviser to the international agency Oxfam: "They can sit back and watch poverty and global temperatures spiral out of control... – but in reality however, when (no longer "if") this happens, no one will be spared." If a contagion from a man-made financial disaster is so widespread even among the richest nations, what can we expect from a climatic disaster? Recently the accepted rise in temperature above the pre-industrial level has been revised downwards to 1.5°C, instead of the widely acknowledged 2°C.

In other words, we are putting the fate of the world in a more vulnerable position, given the ambivalent attitudes and hypocritical pledges of all parties concerned.

With the end of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012, Copenhagen could earn the dubious honour of witnessing the last nail being hammered in the coffin of the ailing world.

That it will happen in a developed economy seems to speak volumes of a world so unjustly divided and driven by unquenchable selfish interest of a few, compelling literally everyone, to be plunged into an irreversibly disastrous future.

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